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COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAMME AND COORDINATION
Resumed thirty-second session
31 August-18 September 1992
Agenda item 9

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS RESUMED THIRTY-SECOND SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Miss Sally E. MOSS (Bahamas)

II. PROGRAMME QUESTIONS

A. Questions related to the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993

B. Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

General

1. At its 29th to 32nd meetings, on 4, 8 and 9 September, the Committee considered the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on revised estimates as requested by the General Assembly in resolutions 46/185 and 46/232 (A/C.5/47/2);

(b) Note by the Secretary-General on procedures and norms for the creation, suppression, reclassification, conversion and redeployment of posts (A/C.5/47/4);

(c) Report of the Secretary-General on section 15 (UNCTAD) relating to the 13 posts formerly attached to the subprogramme on trade among countries having different economic and social systems (A/C.5/47/7).

2. The Committee was informed by the Secretariat that the need for more flexibility in the use of the staff resources of the Organization had to be seen in the context of a number of factors, including the persistent financial difficulties of the United Nations and the increase in the overall demand for the human resources of the Secretariat. It was indicated in the report on revised estimates that a dynamic policy for filling vacant posts would be warranted "by the fact that the staff resources of the Organization are, in many domains of activity, stretched to the limit, including in relation to dramatic increase in peace-keeping operations" (A/C.5/47/2, para. 19). In this regard, it was noted that on 15 August 1992, 235 Professional staff members were assigned to peace-keeping operations, in addition to 222 persons recruited from outside the Secretariat for those operations. Those 235 staff members represented approximately 6 per cent of the established Professional posts financed from the regular budget. Moreover, also on 15 August 1992, 1,394 staff members in the General Service and related categories were assigned to those operations.

3. With regard to the review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, the commitment of the Secretary-General to reform had been reaffirmed. Reporting to Member States on reform was considered part of his mandate. Yet at the present time, the Secretary-General did not intend to submit a specific report to the General Assembly under that agenda item since the restructuring exercise, which implied the ongoing review of efficiency, was still under way. The Committee was informed by the Secretariat that an explanatory note thereon would be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. The Assembly would, moreover, consider the report on workload analysis.

Discussion

4. A number of delegations stated that the report on revised estimates, apart from the financial implications of the first phase of restructuring, should have contained more information on its programmatic aspects in conformity with resolution 46/232. A number of delegations supported the initiatives of the Secretary-General and the steps undertaken to reorganize the Secretariat in order to improve its effectiveness in the implementation of mandates obtained from the legislative bodies. They stated that the restructuring exercise was the prerogative of the Secretary-General in his capacity as Chief Administrative Officer of the Organization. A number of delegations suggested that the Secretary-General should be allowed more discretionary powers with regard to the organization of the Secretariat, comparable to the practice in other organizations of the United Nations family.

5. A number of delegations expressed concern that the delivery of programmes might be affected by the restructuring, particularly in the economic and social sectors, and that the redeployment of staff might result in a certain disequilibrium between units of the Secretariat and even have certain demoralizing effects on staff members. A number of delegations stressed their

expectation that the Secretary-General's decision to suspend external recruitment would be called off as soon as possible so as to permit the inflow of younger people and additional talent as well as to rectify existing inequalities in the geographical distribution of posts that the "freeze" tended to petrify.

6. A number of delegations regretted the lack of a report reviewing the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, the submission of which to the Committee on Programme and Coordination and the General Assembly had been requested by the Committee in its conclusions at the thirty-first session, which had been endorsed by the Assembly at its forty-sixth session.

7. A number of delegations expressed support for the reduction in high-level posts. While a number of delegations expressed appreciation of the accompanying reduction in terms of resulting savings, other delegations stated that budgetary reductions should not be conceived as a primary goal of the restructuring exercise.

8. A number of delegations agreed with the statement that the delays in payment of assessments constituted one of the main causes for the Secretariat's lack of effectiveness. Other delegations disagreed with that statement.

9. One delegation proposed that a new publication be prepared by the United Nations containing a world economic and social survey.

10. A number of delegations stated that as part of the restructuring process, staffing of the Centre for Human Rights should be strengthened. Other delegations stressed that staffing of the Department of Economic and Social Development should not suffer in the process.

11. A number of delegations considered that flexibility in human resource management needed to be enhanced. Other delegations expressed the concern about the flexibility proposed for the Secretary-General in the management of posts. A number of delegations expressed the view that the need for more flexibility in the management of vacant posts had not been proved, and that the Secretariat already had at its disposal procedures which allowed a rapid response to changing requirements. Other delegations proposed that the degree of flexibility in human resource management be regulated through consultations between Member States and the Secretariat.

12. A number of delegations expressed the view that the restructuring process should be extended to middle- and lower-level posts so as to bring about a sharply delineated division of responsibilities within the Secretariat in carrying out its activities in order to get rid of those of marginal significance or those that were unproductive and thus increase the overall efficiency of the Organization. A number of delegations emphasized the need for continued effort to identify such activities with a view to their eventual elimination.

13. With regard to the forthcoming phases of the restructuring process, a number of delegations pointed out that the effects of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the eighth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development had yet to be incorporated in the exercise, and that the review on the relationship between the Department of Economic and Social Development and the regional commissions had not yet been completed. A number of delegations stressed that the assumptions on the programmatic impact of the related restructuring should be made transparent.

Conclusions and recommendations

14. The Committee took note of the revised estimates for the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 and recommended that the General Assembly endorse the proposed reduction in the number of high-level posts. The Committee stressed that that reduction should enhance the decision-making capacity of the Secretariat while streamlining its structures, as well as contribute to the coherent implementation of all mandates of the Organization.

15. The Committee regretted the lack of information on the programmatic aspects of the revised estimates and recommended that the General Assembly be provided with such information. The Committee also recommended that the Secretary-General make available for its consideration and for the Assembly the relevant information on the various qualitative aspects of the restructuring process. Such reporting could take place in the context of the implementation of the relevant provisions of Assembly resolutions 41/213 and 46/232.

16. The Committee expressed the view that the proposals of the Secretary-General concerning the treatment of vacancies called for in-depth consideration by the bodies concerned. The Committee stressed that the issue of greater flexibility in the use of resources appropriated by the General Assembly had to be examined in the context of the existing financial rules and regulations of the Organization and bearing in mind the need for more transparency in the information being provided to Member States, including the information in the proposed programme budget and in the reports on programme performance and budget performance. Issues such as the use of workload analysis and the development of evaluation techniques were of importance for the capacity of Member States to exercise control over the implementation of their decisions on programme and budgetary matters.

17. The Committee confirmed that the restructuring exercise should continue to be carried out by the Secretary-General as Chief Administrative Officer of the Organization, in conformity with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 46/232, and that, in its view, consultations between Member States and the Secretary-General on the restructuring process were essential.

18. The Committee took note of the report on procedures and norms for the creation, suppression, reclassification, conversion and redeployment of posts (A/C.5/47/4), but expressed disappointment about the lack of substance in that report.

19. The Committee also took note of the proposal of the Secretary-General concerning 13 posts formerly attached to the UNCTAD subprogramme on trade among countries having different economic and social systems (see A/C.5/47/7), and recommended that the General Assembly approve that proposal, on the assumption that a final decision thereon be taken in the framework of the programme budget for the forthcoming biennium.

20. Furthermore, the Committee took note of the proposals of the Secretary-General with regard to the review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations.